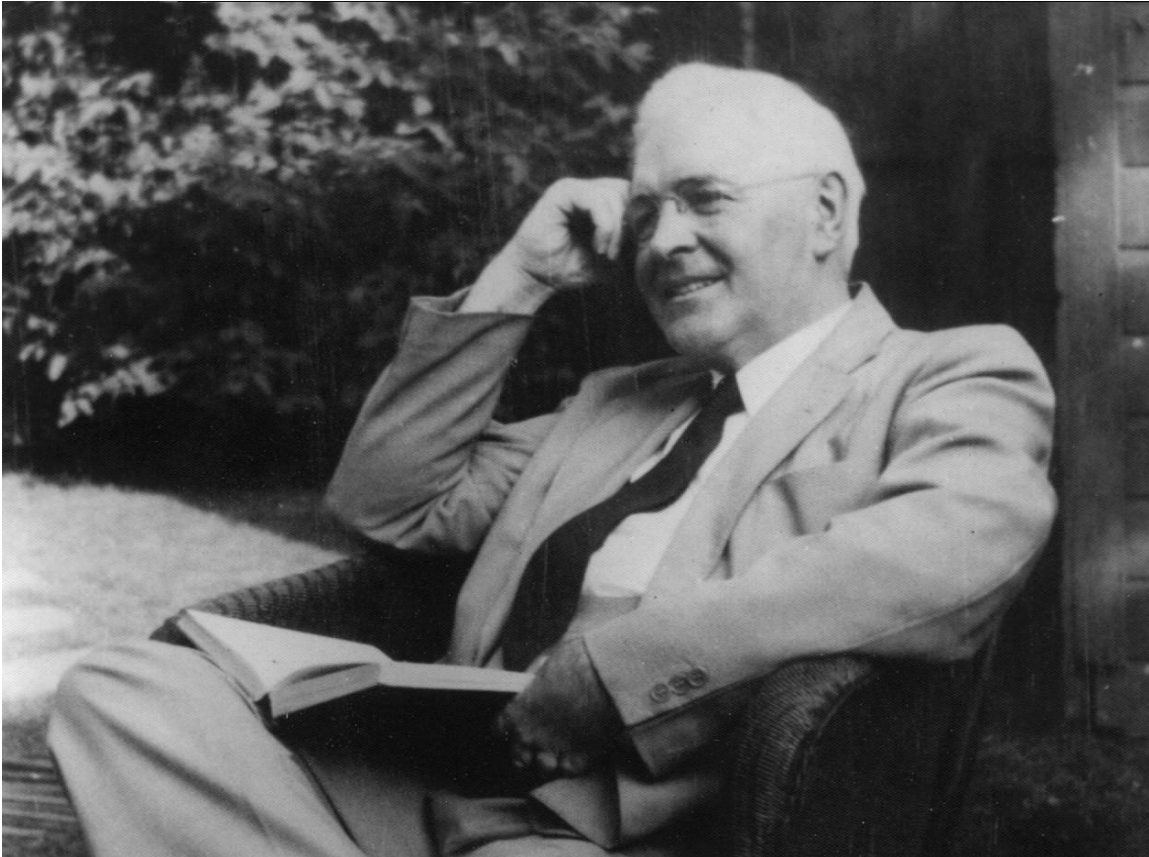

Rev. Russell McGillivray



Biography prepared by:
A. Russell McGillivray
March 8, 2005
Rev. January 25, 2010

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Table of Contents

Preface.....	iv
Early Years (1889 – 1905).....	1
Calling to the Ministry (1906 – 1911)	3
Ottawa Street Mission, Hamilton (1911 – 1913).....	6
Knox College, Toronto (1914 – 1917).....	7
Warkworth (1917 – 1923).....	10
Burlington (1923-1926)	12
Edmonton (1926 – 1930)	18
Ottawa (1930 – 1939)	22
Winnipeg (1939 – 1947).....	24
Oakville (1947 –1951)	38
Dutton (1952 – 1955).....	39
Appendix: Selected Writings	43
Bibliography	50

Preface

My paternal grandfather, Rev. Russell McGillivray, has always loomed large in the memory of our family. I was just three years old when he died, so I do not have any strong memories of him, though I cherish the knowledge that it was he who baptized me. The older generation who heard him preach are unanimous in praising the power of his voice and simplicity of his message.

Some of the stories of his life were retold around the dinner table, especially his call to the ministry while out West. An impressive witness to the quality of his life was the people who were kind to our family because my grandfather had been their minister 30 or 40 years before.

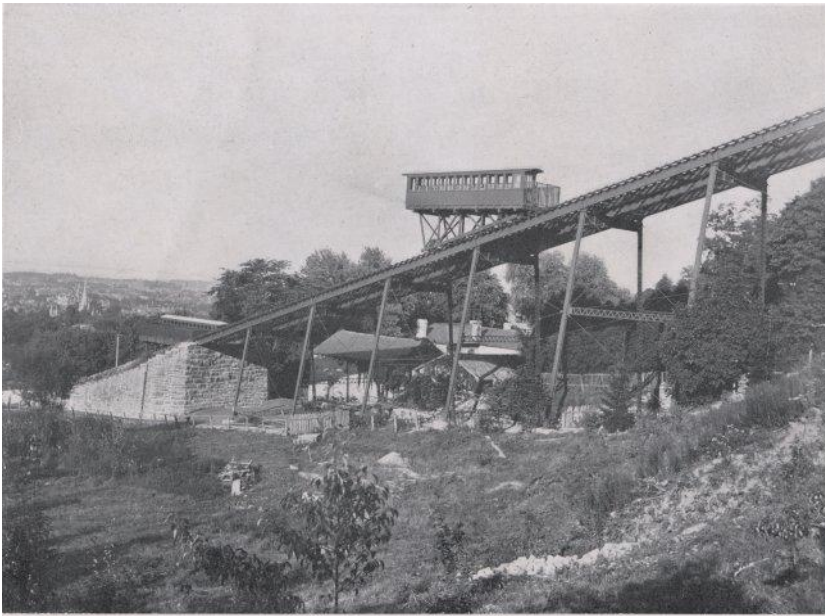
As a family historian, one is fortunate in researching the life of a minister because, compared with the lives of most people, a lot of material is available. For every church he served there are church records, such as minutes of Session, congregational meetings and Presbytery. Church life was more important then than today, so newspapers were more likely to report on the comings and goings of the clergy. The only caveat is that, if history is written by the victors, so too are the minutes of church meetings.

A special thank you to those who have shared with me over the years their memories of Rev. Russell McGillivray: Donald R. McGillivray, Colin A. McGillivray, W. Russell McGillivray, Margaret A. Reader, M. Ann R. Elson and Bernice C. Hearn. Thanks also to the staff at the Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives, Toronto, the United Church Archives in Toronto, Edmonton, Ottawa and Winnipeg, and Lynn Alaric, Archivist, Oliver and District Heritage Society.

A. Russell McGillivray
Caledon, Ontario

Early Years (1889 – 1905)

Russell grew up experiencing life on “both sides of the track” in Hamilton, Ontario. His parents, Donald McGillivray and Margaret Ann Russell, were married by Rev Mungo Fraser of Knox Presbyterian Church on March 30, 1887. Donald was a mail clerk with the Great West Railway. Russell’s grandfather had been a conductor with the same railway and was killed in 1870 when Donald was only six years old. Donald was fifth in a family of seven boys (one died in infancy). With their father’s death, the boys had to go to work early – Donald’s brother John at the age of 12. Several turned to the railway for their livelihood. They lived in a small house at 127 Elgin Street in the tough working class neighbourhood of east Hamilton.



JAMES STREET INCLINE

Russell’s mother, Margaret Russell was the daughter of a successful jeweler, Richard Watson Russell. Richard established the first manufacturing jewelry practice in Hamilton, and eventually became well to do. He had a house at Upper James Street at the foot of the incline railway and several cottages, including one on Hamilton mountain.

Both families attended Knox church, and one supposes that it was there that Donald and Margaret met. It is said that Margaret had been engaged to the second wealthiest man in Hamilton and so she apparently married Donald for love. Her father made her a brooch and earrings of ornate gold and pink alexandrite for her wedding, and these are still in the family.

Whatever Margaret’s expectations, they had four children in less than six years, and lived in rental housing, moving almost every year. Donald worked as a packer, shipper and clerk. Later, he began working on the trains themselves as a brakeman. His salary was \$200 a year, and too much of it was spent on drink.

Russell was born on June 13th, 1889. He was the second child and second son. Russell was born missing the last two joints of the fingers on his left hand (although he still had “his handy thumb”). His father may have felt some responsibility for this, having assaulted his wife when she was pregnant. Russell was able to leverage his father’s

shame and could stand between his parents, protecting his mother and demanding of his father his paycheck.

Russell was not healthy. A bout of whooping cough when he was five years old left one eye turned inward because of the violence of the coughing¹.



His Russell grandparents switched churches to St. Paul's in 1889, but he grew up in Knox with his family and McGillivray cousins. His younger brother, Buller, is remembered for dropping things from the balcony on the heads of worshippers below. A total of 20 McGillivray cousins were baptized at Knox between 1881 and 1904.

Understandably, his mother played up her children's Russell heritage at the expense of their McGillivray one. Three of the eight children had "Russell" as one of their given names and she would tell her children to "remember your Russell". The family received charity from their Russell relations, including one aunt who gave them used clothes, but only after carefully cutting off the buttons.

After the first four children, there was a space of four years and then a 'second family' of four children was born in five years. Russell left public school at the age of 11 and went to work for the Grand Truck railway in a clerical position. This was likely in the Spring of 1901 as the census of March 31 of that year recorded that he had spent 9 months in school.

The need to contribute financially to the family became much more acute when his father was killed in a railway accident on October 27, 1903, five months before the youngest child was born. He saw the news of his father's death first on the company news board.

Donald was killed at the age of 39, almost the same age his own father had been when he was killed. It is said that alcohol was a contributing factor, but the accident was particularly violent as a runaway engine rammed the train on which Donald was a brakeman and his body was severed.

¹ During the First World War, his older brother Donald was invalided from the Front to England because of the effects on his lungs of exposure to mustard gas. His condition suggested tuberculosis, although this was not confirmed by tests. He told the doctors that when he was 11 years of age (i.e. 1898) he was ordered to sleep outside on account of weak lungs, and that at 16 years (i.e. 1903) he had to spend a winter in the open on account of lungs.

Russell's older brother Donald went to work as a conductor for the Grand Trunk railway in Hamilton. He moved to St. Thomas and married in 1908 when he was still 20. A son was born two months later, but he died within four months. A second son died at birth.

Calling to the Ministry (1906 – 1910)

At the age of 15, Russell assumed his future would lie with the railway, and that he could work his way up from a clerk to senior management. On a visit to the company doctor, the doctor challenged him on that assumption, first on the grounds of his fingerless left hand and second on the uncertainty that the company might go out of business. When pressed about getting some kind of certification, Russell confessed that he had sometimes thought about becoming a minister.

As he walked home, he thought about the road ahead – sitting for examinations to get into senior matriculation at high school, graduating from high school, obtaining a Bachelor's degree at university and then a three year Bachelor of Divinity program at Knox College. All while supporting his family.

He was surprised when his mother seemed to support his plans, saying that his grandmother would be pleased. So with tutelage of a kind public school principal, Russell studied for the high school entrance exams, taking them with children much younger and smaller than him. He continued to work at his job from 10pm to 7am, not eating or sleeping nearly enough. He passed his high school entrance and began to study high school subjects on his own.

At his next visit to the company doctor a year later, the doctor was appalled at his physical condition. The doctor would not pass his physical. With the financial needs of the family so great, it seemed the only alternative was to quit school. His mother had another suggestion – to see if his uncle Richard Russell could help. In the family's eyes, Uncle Dick was wealthy, and he had come to the aid of his sister before.

Richard had started his career in the jewellery business he learned from his father, but somehow gravitated to being a mining promoter and property developer. By 1897 he had partnered with two others to form the Fairview Corporation to buy up gold mining properties in Fairview B.C. and to develop a town site.

Fairview is now a ghost town on the outskirts of Oliver in the southern Okanagan valley of British Columbia, half-way between Penticton and the U.S. border. There was money to be made not only from selling mining shares and operating the mines, but in selling building lots to people looking to move West to experience the healthy climate and rich farmland suitable for fruit growing and ranching. By 1901 Richard had moved his family from Hamilton to Fairview where he was, among other things, the postmaster. The Corporation built the Fairview Hotel, the finest in the interior of B.C.

From a peak of 500 residents, Fairview began to decline after 1902, signalled by the loss of the Fairview Hotel in a deadly fire that year. The gold, which was lode gold (occurring in quartz rocks), was high-grade but only found in isolated pockets.

Nevertheless, in 1906 Richard was still in the mining business, and happened to be in Hamilton. Richard offered to employ his nephew as a clerk at Fairview and to accompany him on the train trip as he was travelling there himself. Russell would earn enough to support himself and to send as much money home as he made at the Railway. He promised his mother he would come home in a year.

The train trip West was a revelation to the city boy and invoked a life-long love of the West and the mountains in particular. There was a stop in Winnipeg and the first sight of the Rockies outside of Calgary, finally leaving the transcontinental line at Sicamous on Lake Shuswap.

Another train ride took them to Vernon, where they boarded a paddle-wheeler to travel the length of Lake Okanagan to Penticton. From there, a stage-coach ride took them the 30 miles to Fairview. Up a three mile trail, past the abandoned Morning Star and Brown Bear mines, Russell found his office and living quarters at the Stenwinder mine.

Russell's first sermon was in the Fairview Presbyterian Church when the minister, Rev. A.H. Cameron, asked him to take a service when Cameron had to go to Vancouver for some meetings. A second service led to holding Sunday evening services for the miners and a favourable impression on the Superintendent of Missions for Alberta and B.C. (likely Dr. James C. Herdman) when he was visiting the area.

Then in the spring of 1907 the Fairview Corporation ran out of money and closed the mine. Uncle Richard wanted Russell to return East, but he decided instead to accompany Richard to Vancouver and look up the Superintendent of Missions to see about a mission field placement for the summer. The Superintendent was intrigued, and the Committee approved Russell's appointment despite his total lack of a theological education. The Superintendent wanted him to take the North Thompson River valley and made a special request that at some point he make a trip to the north end of the valley which had never been visited by the church before.

He was now an official representative of the Presbyterian Church.

After a detour to preach at Shuswap to supply for an ailing minister, Russell proceeded to Kamloops at the base of the North Thompson valley. He spent the next six months travelling by horse the 100 mile length of the valley, conducting services at his eight point charge, and making a foray into the north reaches. He left in November in time to keep his promise to his mother.

Later in life Russell wrote several accounts of this most important year in his young life. They can be found [here](#), together with maps and photographs of the period.



Russell returned to Hamilton and completed his high school at Hamilton Collegiate Institute. He entered University College at the University of Toronto and graduated with a B.A. in 1914.

His family supported his calling, although it put the family under additional financial hardship. His sister Nettie had gone to

work at the age of 14 (i.e. about 1906). She had to turn all of her salary over to Russell to put him through university. Nettie was an accomplished business woman who later became controller of the Atkinson Saw Co., and in 1925 was the President of the Business and Professional Women's Club of Hamilton.

Regarding his crossed eye, an uncle said to Russell, "If you are going to become a minister, at least don't be a cock-eyed one", and paid to have his eye corrected.

Ottawa Street Mission, Hamilton (1911 – 1913)

Russell's calling to the ministry was supported by his own minister, Rev. A.E. Mitchell of Knox, Hamilton. In the spring of 1911, Russell was asked by Presbytery to give leadership to a new church and Sunday school that was being planted in the north-east section of the city. The interim moderator was Dr. D.R. Drummond of St. Paul's.



Services of worship began on May 21, 1911. The location was an old pavilion on the grounds of the Maple Leaf Park. The Sunday school, organized in June, met in a large tent at the corner of Ottawa and Barton streets, provided by the Hamilton Presbyterian Church Extension Union. Beginning in October, all meetings were held in Phoenix Hall, on Kensington Street near Barton Street.

On June 2, 1911, the session of Knox church "agreed to pay a bill of two dollars for cards to be used by Russell McGillivray in mission work in the extreme east end of the city". On September 24 the congregation was asked to give a special collection to support this and another mission project in the city.

Advertisements ran in the "Churches" section of the Hamilton Spectator each Saturday during the summer. For example, on Saturday August 5 we find,

Mr. McGillivray will preach as usual to-morrow evening in the tent at the corner of Barton and Ottawa streets. His subject will be Self-Deception. Miss O'Neil will sing. All welcome.

Russell was asked to supply for the Mission during the winter and again in the spring of 1912 he was re-appointed by the General Assembly's Home Mission Committee.

The work of this "Ottawa Street Mission" prospered, and land was donated and bought at the corner of Ottawa and Cannon Streets for a church building. The name "Laidlaw Memorial Institutional Church" was chosen to honour a former minister of St. Paul's church who had supported missions in the city. Forty-two members were received, and the first communion service was held on June 23, 1912.

On April 9, 1912, when discussing summer supply, Rev. Mitchell suggested to the session of Knox that Mr. Russell McGillivray be requested to visit the sick during the pastor's vacation. It is not stated whether he took on this responsibility.

The cornerstone for the Laidlaw church building was laid on November 2, 1912 and the completed building was dedicated on July 13, 1913. By September 1913, Russell reported to Session that there were 25 families connected with the congregation. Sunday school enrollment was 170 and attendance was from 130 to 150. Mid-week prayer meetings were well attended by 30 in the summer, and 45 as the evenings got cooler. A deaconess, Miss Sophia Mitchell, worked in the district under the guidance of Russell McGillivray. In November the first ordained minister for Laidlaw Memorial was called. He took over a church with 75 members.

Other Events of the Period
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • August 2, 1911: Russell and Nettie were witnesses at the marriage of their sister Alice. She had a son four months later who, like his cousins, died six months later. The marriage did not last. • December 12, 1912: Russell was a pallbearer for his grandfather Richard Russell, and was the only grandson so honoured. (However, he was not one of the few grandchildren named in the will.)

By this time, Russell was in the final year of his BA. His yearbook states, “He has fought the good fight and finished the course on time. Though appearing at those lectures only where attendance is taken, Mac. has still found time for the Y. and Student Volunteers.” The quotation under his name is, “And I have laboured somewhat in my time, / And not been paid profusely”².

It is said that he worked as a night reporter one summer for the Toronto Star. Given his mission work in Hamilton, this was most likely during the summer of 1914. He apparently made a favourable impression on the Atkinson family and was invited to their home³.

Knox College, Toronto (1914 – 1917)

In the Fall of 1914, at the mature age of 25 and with several years’ practical experience in preaching, Sunday school and church planting, Russell entered Knox College to begin his three year Bachelor of Divinity degree, just as war was declared in Europe. He finished his first year with second-class standing and the next two years he earned first class standing. The second year he received a \$100 scholarship and in his final year he shared a \$400 postgraduate fellowship with another student.



KNOX COLLEGE (PRESBYTERIAN)
Situated at Spadina Avenue Crescent, with street cars looping it on either side. Beautiful with vines in the summer and fall. Plain and stern of architecture, typical perhaps of its ancestry. Dr. Owen

Beginning in his second year, Russell appears in the minutes of both the

Theological and Literary Society and the Student’s Missionary Society. In the latter, he was appointed to the Mission Committee and the Life Service Committee in his second

² This is a quotation from Robert Browning’s poem “Andrea Del Sarto”

³ Both Don and Colin met Mrs. Ruth Atkinson Hindmarsh (1893-1994) many years later, and she remembered their father.

year, and the following year he was elected President of the Society. Unfortunately, the minutes give little insight into the work of the Student's Missionary Society.

More colour is available from the Theological and Literary Society. This Society was an opportunity for students to share their favourite authors, musical offerings and to hold formal debates on topics of current importance. Russell evidently enjoyed the intellectual engagement with his peers, and whole-heartedly entered into the spirit of the Society.

From the minutes:

- Nov 16, 1915 Mr. Russell McGillivray favoured the society with a solo and responded to the spirited encore.
- Jan 25, 1916 Mr. Russell McGillivray read from "The Professor at the Breakfast Table" by Oliver Wendell Holmes but did not respond to the hearty applause.
- Oct 3, 1916 Was nominated as Secretary, but withdrew his name in favour of [his friend] E.A. (Archie) Thompson.
- Nov 9, 1916 Mr. R. McGillivray rendered a hearty solo entitled "Irish Names" which was loudly encored and much appreciated by the members.
- Dec 5, 1916 Mr. R. McGillivray gave an interesting talk on Sidney Lanier, poet. He sketched his life and told us the basis of his conceptions. Ending with a warm appreciation of the poet's efforts to express his feelings and a few quotations from his poems. Mr. McGillivray introduced the audience to the soul of one of America's finer poets and everyone enjoyed his remarks.
- Mar 13, 1917 Made an Honourary Life Member of the society.

Russell's singing ability was probably an inheritance from his Russell family. It is said that his grandfather had been in the choir of St. Giles cathedral in Edinburgh. His uncle and aunt, James and Janet Russell, were in great demand as singers. As a boy, Russell sang as a choirboy in an Anglican church. His sister Nettie also had the gift and was a professional singer for a time.

It is interesting that Russell apparently admired the poet Sidney Lanier. Lanier died at the age of 39 of consumption. He believed that he had genius-level gifts as a musician and a poet, and he determined not to waste his life in lesser pursuits. His father would have had him settle down with him in business and share his income, but that would have been the suicide of every duty and ambition. So he wrote his father:

. . . Then, as to business, why should I, nay, how can I, settle myself down to be a third-rate struggling lawyer for the balance of my little life, as long as there is a certainty almost absolute that I can do some other thing so much better?

The theme of wasting one's life and of missing one's calling occurs in some of Russell's sermons that survive. In one preached on May 10, 1936 on the text "Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity" – Ps. 24:4 and published in "The New Outlook" we read:

Sometimes they just go on and on, being used here and there, but on the whole, using the great gifts of life, body, mind and spirit, for empty, vain things. And God must just have to mark over the whole of that life effort the terrible word, from His standpoint and from ours, "Wasted".

One area that Russell considered contributed to a wasted life was abuse of alcohol. Based on his family experience, he determined not to touch alcohol and was a supporter of Temperance.

His Knox college yearbook caption says, "It is said that when Mac preached his college sermon the heavens trembled, the earth shook and the sun stood still. He was born in the 19th century, began to live in the 20th, and graduated from Varsity in 1914. A distinguished future will be his in the ministry of the church."

A story is that as he was about to preach his first sermon at Knox College, the professor asked him if he had his notes. He showed them to the professor who promptly took them away and made Russell preach without them. After that, he never again used notes in the pulpit.

Later, Russell wrote:

We have read, we have been instructed, but some time there should be no more paper. The writing is on our hearts, and the words of our mouth are the thoughts and purposes of heart and mind.

Warkworth (1917 – 1923)

Russell had a church lined up before he graduated. On March 6, 1917 the congregation of St. Andrew's, Warkworth voted to call Russell as pastor of the congregation "as soon as he is eligible". The call was unanimous as no other nomination was made.



The matchmaker was likely his friend E. Archie Thompson. His father, Rev. D.A. Thompson was minister at nearby Hastings and was the interim moderator for Warkworth.

Russell was ordained and inducted into the pastoral charge of Warkworth Presbyterian Church on April 19, 1917. Rev Thompson presided and put the questions.

Two months later on June 30, 1917 Russell married May Bird Rouse in Hamilton. Again, it was probably Knox church in Hamilton where they met. May was the daughter of Isaac Bird Rouse who had started out as a traveling salesman, but who became an optician and settled in Hamilton about 1900. A magazine article from 1910 says,

"In Hamilton, the leading optician is I. B. Rouse, proprietor of the Globe Optical Co., located at No. 111 King Street East. Mr. Rouse is district agent for the Acousticon hearing instrument and the famous genuine "Shur-on" eyeglasses. Mr. Rouse is a graduate of the class of '98 of the Chicago Ophthalmic College and Hospital, the oldest and most thorough optical college in America. He is one of Hamilton's most progressive skilled and professional men." Magazine of Industry, Hamilton, Dec 1910.

May's parents were both members of the Missionary Board at Knox. In 1912, I.B. Rouse was elected as an elder, but he declined to serve.

Both May and Russell were in poor health and the marriage took place without fanfare. The minister was Rev. S. Burnside Russell (no relation) of Erskine church, where his mother attended. Neither of the witnesses were family.

Russell and May had been going out since at least 1912⁴, but it is said that Russell had been engaged before to another girl. His sister Nettie bought an engagement ring for him,

⁴ I have a book given by May to Russell for Christmas 1912 and another on his birthday, probably in 1913.

and when that engagement was broken off, he returned the ring to her. The ring remains in her family.

May shared, or at least encouraged, Russell's interest in nature and birds. She gave him a book on nature for Christmas 1912 and a book on birds for his birthday, probably in 1913 since he records birds seen on the Bent River on August 5 and Muskoka August 8, 1913⁵.

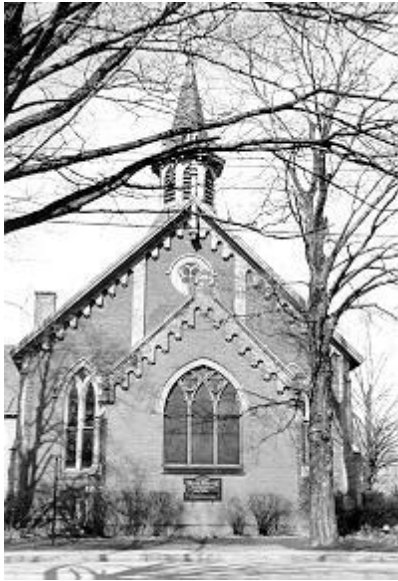
After four years of marriage, May became pregnant and gave birth to a son, Donald Rouse, on March 11, 1922. Given her poor health, the birth was traumatic and May died some three weeks later on March 30. She is buried in the Rouse family plot in Hamilton Cemetery.

Other Events of the Period
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• June 16, 1918: Russell's younger brother Alexander George ("Buller") was killed in a plane crash in England while serving with the RAF.• September 25, 1918: Performed the marriage of May's sister, Bernice Rouse, in Hamilton.• March 4, 1919: Performed the marriage of Stella Baker (who later would become his sister-in-law) at Warkworth

⁵ Judging by the entries in his bird books, the peak of his birding activity was in the Spring of 1914

Burlington (1923-1926)

Besides the personal reasons for wanting the leave Warkworth, professionally it was a pretty slow place. The big issues year after year were whether to repair the roof on the shed, replaster the manse and electrify the church building. What better place to go to, than back to where Russell was known and where his mentors in the church were.



The call to Knox, Burlington was both a fresh start after the tragic loss of the previous year and a homecoming, for Burlington was part of the Presbytery of Hamilton. The interim moderator was Dr. Drummond of St. Paul's church, the minister of the Russell family. The congregation of Knox voted to call Russell on January 23, 1923. There were four candidates, and Russell received 57% of the votes on the first ballot.

At the induction service on March 15 Rev. S. Burnside Russell read the lesson while Dr. Banks Nelson of Knox, Hamilton was the preacher. Dr. Drummond "congratulated the congregation on having Mr. McGillivray as their pastor, as he was one of the youngest members of the ministry and was one of the brightest. He knew that the congregation would progress under his pastorate, and while there was a great

opportunity in Burlington, it would be faithfully taken care of by the new pastor."

Once installed in the church, his engagement to Alice Victoria Baker⁶ of Warkworth was announced, and they were married in her parents' home on April 24 by Rev. D.A. Thompson, who was still at Hastings. There was a two-week honeymoon to New York and Atlantic City.

Though an Anglican, Alice had been the organist at the church in Warkworth since 1906. She resigned her position as organist and choirmaster at the end of 1919. Russell wrote in the Session minutes, "Miss Baker has rendered excellent service". Alice had earned her A.R.C.T. and later supplemented the family income by giving piano lessons.



⁶ Genealogy is full of ironies (or divine humour). Prior to moving to Hamilton, the Rouse family was from Plattsville, Blenheim Tp, Oxford Co (near Waterloo, Ontario). Plattsville was built on land originally granted by the Crown in 1802 to Timothy Skinner of Stamford. Timothy willed the land to four of his daughters, one of who, Patience, married Henry Baker. Patience and Henry Baker were great-grandparents of Alice Victoria Baker.

The Burlington period is most remembered for the church union controversy. Russell was in favour of Union (as was his friend S. Burnside Russell), though the majority in Hamilton presbytery was opposed. By an Act of Parliament, The United Church of Canada was to come into being on June 10, 1925 and the Act set out the rules by which each Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational church would decide whether it would enter the union.

At Knox, the congregation met on December 22, 1924 and set a schedule for voting. The church Sunday school room would be the polling station, and voting would take place at a designated hour each day (except Sunday) for the next two weeks. The ballots were to be counted at a congregational meeting on January 5. Perhaps an indication of the suspicions on both sides was a decision taken by a narrow margin to have the ballots signed. The Clerk of Session, John Rae, presented a certified roll of those entitled to vote, and he was made the poll clerk.

On December 29 Russell wrote, “The vote I believe is going Union. Antis who said they would follow the church if it went into Union are now openly declaring they will leave the church. One is not surprised. They have never acknowledged a majority yet.”

Unfortunately, after a week Mr. Rae fell ill and on December 31 Russell posted a notice on the church door, after conferring with congregational leaders, to extend the voting for another week following the January 5 meeting. His action was condoned at the January 5 congregational meeting, and the meeting agreed to extend the voting another week with the tally to be on January 10. One member registered his protest that the revised procedure no longer followed that laid out by the Act of Parliament and therefore the meeting and the voting were illegal.

Other Events of the Period
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • September 17, 1923: Russell’s mother died of painful stomach cancer. • May 5, 1924: Second son, Colin Alexander, was born. He was named after two uncles, Colin Baker and Alexander McGillivray, who were killed in the First World War. • September 9, 1924: Performed the marriage of his sister Irene at Knox church, Burlington • March 25, 1925: Performed the marriage of his sister Nettie at St. Giles church, Hamilton • June 28, 1926: Third son, William Russell, born

On January 10, 1925 the returning officer reported that Knox congregation had voted to join the United Church of Canada, with a margin of 109 to 90.

In May, Russell wrote, “. . . we are pretty badly shut off on the Hamilton end . . . ever since the vote we have been fighting a financial problem in which we have been dropping a hundred dollars a month and for a small church that is fairly serious. We will be all right in time . . .”

The United Church of Canada came into being on June 10, 1925 and Russell attended a mass rally at Massey Hall⁷ in Toronto. The next day at a special congregational meeting the name of Knox Presbyterian Church was changed to “Christ’s Church of the United Church of Canada”. The only sour note in what was “one of the most enjoyable

⁷ Actually, Massey Hall proved too small, and the 24,000 participants met at the Mutual Street Arena in Toronto.

congregational meetings ever held” was when Russell revealed that a Writ had been issued against himself, John Rae and one of the trustees, Dr. Kerns, by the leaders of the sizable number of “non-concurring” Presbyterians. They claimed that the vote taken was illegal and therefore should be set aside.

A minority left Knox to continue as a Presbyterian congregation. On June 21 a deputation attended the Hamilton Presbytery meeting to see if they could acquire the services of a Presbyterian minister. They claimed to represent 40 families and have the financial ability to provide \$1,500 annually for support of a minister. Presbytery appointed Rev. H.B. Ketchen as interim moderator to organize and supply ordinances.

Russell took an active role in the Hamilton presbytery and Wentworth and Halton conference of the United Church. He chaired the presbytery Missionary committee and was a commissioner to the second United Church General Conference, held in Montreal on June 10 to 19, 1926.

The church’s lawyer dealt with the writ issue, but it was clear the Antis were not going to give up. Russell believed that “This charge was held for the United Church absolutely straight and I think should be held for the United Church. The loss of it, being the only Presbyterian charge in Halton County to go in, and being near the slide that took place in Hamilton has greatly angered the Anti powers.”

The situation in Burlington was by no means unique, and the provincial government set up the Ontario Church Property Commission to deal with disputes. Most arose over the division of real property, but the Commission also had the authority to investigate disputed votes and cases of ‘hardship’ where the continuing Presbyterians, often a sizable minority, were left with no place to worship. In some cases, the Commission awarded United church buildings to Presbyterians where there was a surfeit of United Church congregations and nowhere for the Presbyterians to worship. The Commission held hearings weekly around the province from September 25 to March 26 of the following year.

In September the Burlington Presbyterians (along with 5 other churches in the Hamilton Presbytery) requested the services of the Ontario Church Property Commission. They asked both for a declaration that the vote was illegal, and for relief under the ‘hardship’ provision.

The Commission heard the case of Knox on October 2 and gave its ruling on October 21. The Commission was sensitive to the ‘hardship’ issue, since there were now two United churches “within a few yards of each other” and no nearby Presbyterian building. Unfortunately, neither United Church sanctuary was big enough to hold a combined congregation. There were simply no funds or property to divide, so all the Commission could recommend was that Christ Church offer the Presbyterians the use of the church on Sunday afternoons, free of charge, until the end of the following year.

On the issue of the legality of the vote, the Commission found that most of the objections were ably answered by Christ Church's submission, which showed by reference to the minutes of the relevant Session and congregational meetings that the Antis' allegations were factually incorrect. The one issue the Committee noted as possibly interesting was the one about the signed ballots that, despite being voted for in the congregational meeting, was against the terms of the Union legislation. However, they believed that they did not have to rule on the vote because the only substantive issue was the hardship one.

Mr. R.S. Cassels, the Commissioner writing their ruling added,

While it is unnecessary for the disposition of the application to do so, I feel it my duty to add that after following the evidence closely I am clearly of the opinion that the Reverend Mr. McGillivray and his session acted throughout the voting proceedings in a fair and impartial manner and with a sincere desire to follow as best they could the clumsy and ambiguous procedure inflicted upon them by the legislators and legal draftsmen at Ottawa.

Russell promptly wrote Rev. Ketchen to offer the minority group the use of the church on Sunday afternoons, "free of charge or contribution for upkeep", but they met instead in an Anglican church hall. Russell noted later that they did not even respond to his letter of invitation. Perhaps the fact that he included a paragraph to "cordially invite them to again be with us in the work of the congregation" went too far. His motivation, he said, was that "We are seeking, as we always have, peace and utter fairness to all".

The Commission's ruling was supposed to be the end of the matter, but the lawyer for the non-concurring group picked up on the Commission's oversight in dealing fully with the signed ballot issue and demanded an authoritative ruling. The Commission had to thoroughly investigate this issue for another congregation in November, and that set a precedent for their decision on Knox.

On December 1 they issued a supplementary judgment in which they decided two to one to call for a second ballot. The fact that 20% of the congregation did not vote the first time might indicate that some people were kept away by the lack of privacy in having to sign a ballot. It was true that unsigned ballots cast were not counted⁸. In any case, the signed ballot contravened the provisions of the Act. The vote was therefore irregular and illegal, and the congregation should be given the opportunity to declare its view on union in a legal way.

The Ontario Legislature passed the Church Union Amending Bill to authorize second votes at six named congregations. The members of Knox Presbyterian who had been on the roll on July 1924 (i.e. from both sides) were permitted to vote.

⁸ Two ladies voted with unsigned ballots and immediately after casting them, were made aware that they should have been signed. They were allowed to vote again and, since unsigned ballots were not going to be counted, there was no chance of their votes being counted twice.

By April, the Presbyterians were trying several tacks in case the vote was still against them. They believed that the legislated amendment gave them the option of buying the church whether or not the United congregation wanted to sell. Dr. Drummond, who was a continuing Presbyterian, in confidence made Russell aware of this strategy. In passing the information on to the church's lawyer, Russell wrote, "In anything you may do, do not mention Drummond's name. He was supposed to be approaching me as a friend. I doubt it but must respect the supposition." His suspicion is a sad reflection on the loss of fellowship between former colleagues.

The Christ Church session met on April 13, agreed that the church property was not for sale, and decided to hold a new vote on union at the earliest possible moment. Russell felt, "since we have kept as close to the letter and spirit of the law from the beginning as was possible, that now we should show our position clear by maintaining that we are ready to carry out the wish of the Commission just as soon as the law made it possible."

Inevitably, both sides differed on who should be on the membership list. Russell found the Anti's list "quite funny". The Presbyterians wanted to include a few who had been purged from the roll by Session back in March 1923 for lack of attendance at ordinances. Purging the roll had been one of Russell's priorities when he arrived since the roll showed 583 members for a congregation where perhaps 200 were active. The purged roll of 251 names had been adopted at the Session meeting on January 15, 1924 and was the roll used for the voters' list of July 19, 1924. Ironically, as Russell noted, the most influential elder on the Session helping in the purging of the roll was a convinced Anti.

Unfortunately, Session had failed to notify people that they were being dropped from the roll, and some had believed they were still members in good standing. However, Mr. Justice Orde, who was appointed to oversee the membership list, agreed with the United side that the Session had acted in its authority, and he permitted only one amendment to the list where a person's certificate had gone astray. His ruling was issued on June 18.

The (United) Hamilton Presbytery meeting on May 11 moved, "That this Presbytery place on record its appreciation and admiration of Christ Church, Burlington, on the splendid way in which a trying situation has been met and expresses the hope that Christ Church will, in the coming vote, retain its position as a congregation in the United Church."

Both sides met at Knox on July 5, 1926 to elect officers and make arrangements for the vote. Russell chaired the meeting. A returning officer, a poll clerk and six scrutineers (3 from each side) were elected. Voting took place daily from July 6 to July 21.

The count took place on July 21 at 9:00pm, and the returning officer announced the results as 137 to 102 against Union, with 4 cancelled or rejected ballots. "Rev. Russell McGillivray stated his duties were through as chairman and vacated the chair." Rev. Ketchen was elected chair of the meeting, and he reported that the keys, communion roll

and church books had been left by the United Congregation.⁹ Dr. Banks Nelson closed the meeting in prayer.

A newspaper noted,

Many of those who voted for Union on the first ballot, which was illegal on account of being signed by the voter, went to the Union services only a short time and returned to Knox Church. In the second vote, a blind man, a paralytic alleged to have not been in church in 20 years, was reported to have come in to vote, and an old man aged 87 was brought some miles. There was also a campaign fund. As the vote was taken on the membership list of 1924, voters were brought from Winnipeg, New York, Buffalo, Detroit, Montreal and other places.

Dr. S. Banks Nelson later recalled that one girl, a nurse in Toronto, was unable to leave her duties to vote. Dr. Nelson drove to Toronto, secured permission from the hospital for her to leave, and brought her back to Burlington.

Russell must have sensed what was coming. He had already accepted a call to Central United in Edmonton, Alberta on June 24. The result of amalgamating congregations and so many Presbyterians staying out was a surplus of United ministers in eastern Canada. The West meanwhile had a dire shortage, and the United Church encouraged presbyteries to loan their younger members to the West for some years. Although this was not the terms under which Russell went to Edmonton, the sense of going where the need was greatest probably played a part in his decision.

Hamilton Presbytery processed Russell's call to Central on July 22 to take effect on September 2. They agreed, "That we place on record our very high appreciation of his brotherly bearing and his splendid work in the Presbytery and also our deep regret at his removal from our midst. We pray God's blessing to rest upon him and that success may attend his labours." Presbytery then noted the results of the vote on Union and asked Russell to prepare an historic note to be incorporated in minutes of Presbytery. This was apparently not done.

In its column in "The New Outlook", the correspondent for the Hamilton Conference wrote,

. . . Mr. McGillivray has been one of the most efficient Presbyterian ministers in this locality, and none was more enthusiastic about union, and few did more to bring Churches into line with union than he. But his name has long since passed the local line and the call from the far West has been so strong and insistent that Mr. McGillivray has decided to turn his face to the setting sun. He will leave this Conference with many to regret his going, but who will be certain that he will be the right man in the right place in the growing West.

⁹ This was also a gracious act and avoided further unpleasantness.

Edmonton (1926 – 1930)

Central had hoped that Russell could be inducted as early as August 15, but this was delayed to September 3. Edmonton must have been attractive to him, both as a return to the West and as a place where Union brought churches together rather than causing them to split. Unfortunately, his stay in Edmonton was cut short at four years. Despite the success in his ministry, what were called “health reasons concerning his family” caused Russell to move back East. The health reason officially was Alice’s low blood pressure, which was aggravated by Edmonton’s higher altitude. Also important no doubt was her homesickness and desire to be closer to her large family.

Central United was the result of the coming together of Grace Methodist and Westminster Presbyterian churches, with the inaugural service being held on May 2, 1926. Both churches had been founded in 1905. Both of the incumbent ministers in 1926 tendered their resignations to clear the decks for a new era in inter-church fellowship. The church met in the former Westminster, and funds from the sale of the Grace Methodist property allowed for major renovations to be carried out.

In 1928 Central hosted the annual meeting of the Alberta Conference of the United Church of Canada. At that time there were 740 members, with hundreds of adherents, and “their minister, Rev. Russell McGillivray, holds the love and confidence of his people to a remarkable degree.” A measure of the affection that Central felt for Russell is that he was asked to preach on May 1, 1955 at the opening services for Central’s new building.

The following tribute to Russell’s ministry appeared in the Edmonton Journal and was apparently written by Robert McCreath, the Clerk of Session.

With the closing of the ministry of Rev. Russell McGillivray, B.A., B.D. at Central United Church, which takes place on Sunday universal regret is felt not only throughout the congregation but also the city, where he has during his four years pastorate endeared himself both to the congregation and a large body of citizens to whom he was well known, and while Central United loses an exceptionally able pastor, a good and progressive citizen is lost to the Edmonton Ministerial Association and the Alberta Synod.

Coming to Edmonton four years ago from Burlington Ontario, Mr. McGillivray was the first pastor of Central United Church, which was formed as a result of the union of Grace Methodist and Westminster Presbyterian congregations, and how successfully he worked into one harmonious unit the consummation of the union is amply demonstrated in the achievements of the congregation during that period.

Every Communion season has witnessed additions to the Fellowship of the congregation and approximately 100 new members have been added to the church roll by profession of faith and by Certificate. In almost every instance withdrawals from the membership have been on

account of removals from the city. These have been four years of steady and most encouraging growth and a growing number of friends have worshipped with the congregation in addition to the membership at both morning and evening services.

The financial activities of the congregation have at all times been sound, the Missionary budgets of the church each year being met in a most loyal manner, this department of the church's work receiving the full measure of the quota allotted to it. In addition the current expenses of the congregation have been at all times responded to as well as a special piece of work which involved renovation of the church basement and addition to the rear of main building at an approximate cost of \$10,000. All this giving definite evidence of Mr. McGillivray's progressive leadership and the loyalty of the congregation to an able exponent of the Gospel.

The spiritual life of the congregation has been maintained on a high plane through the regular church services and mid-week meetings, the Sunday School, Young Men's Class (a splendid group of young men of whom Mr. McGillivray was the leader) and Boys and Girls clubs weekly meetings. The work of the Women's Association at all times has been a marked feature at Central United and the splendid achievements of the ladies is a decided tribute to Central United's capacity for doing a big job and doing it well, and further evidence of loyalty to the church and pastor.

In the interests of fostering a closer fellowship among the Men of the church and their friends Mr. McGillivray was instrumental in having formed the Men's free and easy club. During the Winter months the Club assembled and had Supper once a month in the church basement, the men being entirely responsible for the meal arrangements and the kitchen work necessary before and after supper. Following supper games took up the remainder of the evening or sing-song programs and addresses. These meetings were very popular and well responded to by the men folk, attendances ranging from 30 up to as many as 60 men and friends and proving indeed a splendid medium for fellowship.

Gifted indeed with a keen and understanding mind, Mr. McGillivray was at all times a most able leader in discussion and had the happy faculty of expressing in clear and concise language his views on the subject under review or the particular business policy being discussed. This same attribute at all times was evident in his pulpit work his sermons being at all times masterful in their analysis of the subject and conveying the clearest evidence not only of a background of high theological attainment and rich and devout inspiration and faith in Jesus and His teachings and purposes in our lives, but also conveying Mr. McGillivray's deep conviction that all these things should culminate in a truly practical

and perfectly honest Christianity that can work and is applicable and sorely needed now, requiring courage on the part of the people and the church to fearlessly face the issues afflicting humanity in these days.

This briefly presents the man and his unswerving conviction and message and he always was eloquent in his presentations because of ardent study and firm grip of his subject, his plan of sequence in following it through and his splendid fluency of speech. In congregational singing and in solo work he also rendered much valuable service.

Mr. McGillivray had an extremely happy combined quality of grasping not only the seriousness but also the humor in all matters where these presented themselves, and his cheerful and at times jocular manner were to him an essential part of the spirit and message of Jesus – a live Christianity full of vitality, nevertheless an ardent devotion to the Almighty Father. With this splendid equipment, Mr. McGillivray is not only a faithful Minister but truly a great Christian leader living in his character and expressing in his love for the Master and his people a splendid loyalty to Christ.

Because of health reasons as concerning his family Mr. McGillivray leaves Central United church to take up the pastorate of Calvin United church, Ottawa. Deep and very sincere regrets are felt because of the severance of a successful and happy relationship here, and the prayers of the local church go out to him and his family for the continued blessing of Christ in his new charge and in every future activity in the cause of Christianity.

Mr. McGillivray expects to leave Edmonton on Monday and to occupy the pulpit in his new charge on Sunday, October 12.

One can see in the Men's free and easy club, echoes of the Theological and Literary Society of Knox College.

An elder and lifelong friend, Kenneth Wilson, penned the following:

**Lament over the departure of the
McGillivrays 1929**

There's an empty manse a callin'
For a parson wot is gone
There's a heap o' folks abawlin
Cause the kids ain't on the lawn.

There's a gang wots quit a playin'
Cause the nut wot played ain't here,
There's a stranger at us prayin'
And it sure sounds mighty queer.

There's the darndest empty feelin'
In the place where friends are kept
And there's water to the ceilin'
In the places we have wept.



McGillivray family in Edmonton, flanked by Catherine and Kenneth Wilson

Ottawa (1930 – 1939)

The Ottawa pastorate lasted almost nine years, making it the longest, and arguably the happiest, of Russell's ministry. Calvin Presbyterian and Ottawa South Methodist had both joined the United Church in 1925. As their congregations grew, they decided rather than expanding their existing buildings to join together in a new building. This was approved by Presbytery on February 11, 1930 and they began united services at Calvin on May 3. Both ministers resigned and accepted calls to other congregations.

The search committee put forward two candidates, Rev. Russell McGillivray who had preached on September 7, and a distinguished minister from Wales. To aid in their decision, the committee wrote to the Mr. J.P. Giffen, the business manager of the Edmonton Journal, for his opinions on Rev. McGillivray. In his reply,

Mr. Giffen informs us that in the mind of many people Mr. McGillivray is the most outstanding United Church minister in Alberta. The Journal reporter who gathers the Sunday night sermons in the various churches each week states positively that he is the best preacher in the city. He has created many strong friendships amongst the congregation and his work with the young people is outstanding. Mr. Giffen also says that there would be a very keen regret not only on the part of his parishioners but on the part of Edmonton as a whole if Mr. McGillivray were to leave the city.

The congregation voted on September 30 and called Rev. Russell McGillivray who began



on October 12. A prestigious site for the new church was chosen on Bank St. near the Rideau Canal. The name Southminster United Church was chosen in February 1931 and the cornerstone was laid on May 16, 1931. The stone building, constructed despite the Depression at a cost of \$120,000, included a Casavant organ.

The first service was held in the Fellowship Hall on November 8, 1931 and the new sanctuary was dedicated on January 10, 1932. The bulletin for the dedication services notes,

The membership on inauguration comprised 390 families or 790 members and a Sunday School roll of 737. These numbers have since steadily increased by the devoted leadership of our beloved pastor, Rev. Russell McGillivray. The progress achieved so far since union has more than justified the lofty plans for Greater Service in this section of God's Vineyard and by His Grace may Southminster continue in its forward movement of Divine Service to all mankind.

Russell indulged his enjoyment of golf at the Ottawa Hunt Club. In summers, the children would be farmed out to their grandparents – Donald to the Rouses in Hamilton and Colin and Russell Jr. to the Bakers in Warkworth. Helpful parishioners sometimes made a cottage available. A friend from Burlington days, J.M. Wallace, owned a lake and cabin near Omeemee and invited Russell to go fishing with him.

On September 19, 1931 Russell's last child, his daughter Margaret Alice was born. On October 12, 1935 Russell had a family portrait taken by a 27-year-old Ottawa photographer named Yousuf Karsh. Three images were taken and the negatives are in the Karsh collection at the National Archives¹⁰.

Sometime in this period a 16mm silent movie was made of a day in the life of Southminster. The photographers were R. Graeme Fraser and F. Radford Crawley¹¹. The film includes scenes of a worship service, Sunday school, nursery, boy scouts, minister's office and a church hockey league game.

McGillivray Family by Karsh of Ottawa, Oct 12, 1935



¹⁰ The negatives are items number PA-179921, 2 and 3. As the pictures are over 50 years old, copyright has expired.

¹¹ F.R. "Budge" Crawley (1911-1987) was an Ottawa native. Starting with home movies, he founded Crawley Films in 1939 and produced primarily educational and industrial films before turning to television and feature films. Budge won an Oscar in 1976 for *The Man Who Skied Down Everest*.

Winnipeg (1939 – 1947)

On April 17, 1939 a call to Rev Russell McGillivray was signed by the members of Augustine United Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba. This church, which had begun as a Presbyterian church in 1908, was regarded as the largest congregation in the United Church.

Why was Russell attracted by a move, at the age of 50, when he had a successful ministry in the Nation's capital? He believed that ministers should not stay too long in one pulpit. He felt his work was done in Ottawa and should take on a new challenge. Nevertheless, it was an unhappy move for the older children who were well into High School, and for Alice who liked to be near her large family in Warkworth.

Russell ascended the pulpit for the first time on September 3, the morning that War was declared in Europe. His sons Donald and Colin enlisted and Donald served overseas. His son Russell enlisted at eighteen but by then the War was drawing to a close.

The 1940 annual report of Session noted, "Mr. McGillivray has already won golden opinions in the church; his direct, heart searching preaching and his friendly interest in us all and in every department of the church are responded to by increasing congregations."

In the 1945 annual report, Session gave a fuller account of his ministry.

Our Minister, the Reverend Russell McGillivray, has completed another successful year of his ministry in Augustine Church which began in 1939, the opening year of World War 2. The success achieved by this church during the difficult war years has, in very large measure, been due to the splendid leadership given by our Pastor to the various organizations of the Church. His keen analytical mind and fine judgment have solved many of the problems which arose from time to time.

His sermons have been direct, forceful and challenging, and we have never been asked to accept a responsibility which he himself was not willing to shoulder. We rejoice in his strength of character; his strong faith and deep conviction as to the part the Church must take in making the world a better place in which to live. The Sunday messages as well as the thoughts expressed in the Church Calendar are an inspiration to those of our congregation who come prepared to worship, and an incentive to a more practical Christian way of living.

The splendid work being done by Mr. McGillivray in his calls upon the sick, bereaved, and those in trouble is most commendable. The many philanthropic undertakings associated with the church here and afield owe much of their success to the masterly presentation of the cause from the pulpit.

We pray that his hands may be strengthened so that the work may be continued and that he will have the deep satisfaction in his own soul that he is being used to spread the Kingdom of God here.

One long-time member, the Honourable Edward Brown, prepared the following as an address to the annual meeting held in 1946. It provides another insight into Russell's ministry at Augustine.

I wish to make a reference to our Minister, the Reverend Russell McGillivray, B.A., B.D., for whom as a man I have conceived a very great respect, and for him as a minister of the Gospel, profound admiration. In my mind's eye I see our Minister as a manly Christian. One of [his] outstanding qualities of character is an all-apparent, deep-seated sincerity, which is as a shining light in a world today where this quality of character is very rare indeed. I see our Minister secondly as a profound preacher of the Gospel who speaks from conviction and who, in a literal sense, believes in what is sometimes spoken of as the old-fashioned truths of the Gospel, such as

1. Immortality or life after death.
2. The redemption of the world or believers from the consequences of their sins by the suffering and death of the Son of men.
3. The presence in the world of the Holy Spirit influencing the hearts of men and women.
4. The love of God for all mankind as portrayed by the life and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Minister refuses to compromise with truth as he sees it. He is not an opportunist in any sense of the word. Willingness to compromise is a prominent feature of the national life of Canada. We find it in our schools of learning, in our colleges and universities. We find it of necessity in the commercial life of the country. We find it very much so in the political arena, and we find it in the officialdom of the Church and in the pulpit. How refreshing, then, to find a man in our pulpit who is bound to speak the truth as he sees it, whether it pleases or displeases the public. Our minister does not use manuscript in the pulpit, nor does he read the long prayer, although many ministers do both, but he stands out forthrightly and delivers his message in an arresting and convincing manner.

The Ministry of Augustine Church today is a virile ministry. It is an intellectual ministry. It is a spiritual ministry, and it is with all a kindly, sympathetic and gracious ministry.

But there is another side to the picture and perhaps a more difficult one. To enjoy widespread popularity and Minister must be, in common language, termed a good mixer. He must be able to feel at home wherever he appears and help others to feel at home. His duties are multitudinous in

number. He is called upon to bring our children into the Church through the ordinance of baptism. He is called upon to unite our young people in marriage and to visit the sick and to comfort the dying, and to bring hope and consolation to the bereaved. And beyond these duties in hundreds of opportunities through visitation and otherwise by his manly bearing and by the light that shines on his face, indicating the spirit within, he is able to bring men and women everywhere into closer relation with the Master of Men.

This is the role that our Minister has been carrying on in the congregation.

. . . I express the hope, and I know you will join with me, that as the years of his ministry pass, Mr. McGillivray, recalling this circumstance, will feel heartened and encouraged in carrying on his work, and more and more as the years pass his mind may be impressed with the fact that the work he is doing in Augustine Church and the influence he exerts there and in the City of Winnipeg, and beyond the City's boundaries, and the work for the Church in general as the opportunity presents itself, that this work and this service and this labor of love is of very great importance indeed, and is worthy in every respect of his finest endeavor.

In giving expression to his feelings, Mr. Brown believed "that these represented the feelings of the congregation generally". Sadly, there was a minority at least who would have disagreed. By 1947, dissention came into public view.

Four elders unhappy with Russell's ministry began meeting and gathering support for his resignation. They circulated a letter to the congregation that presented data showing the Augustine was not keeping pace in growth and givings with other United churches.

Russell exposed the conflict in the pulpit on March 9, and called a congregational meeting for March 17 at which he would call for a vote to either "confirm the Minister in his ministry in Augustine Church, or ask him to leave that ministry at Augustine Church".

A reporter was present and the issue appeared in the press. The extraordinary article, full of quotes from his message on Sunday morning, appeared on the front page of Monday's Winnipeg Tribune.

Won't Resign, Pastor Tells Flock Presbytery Will Have to Fire Him, Says McGillivray

Charging that meetings had been held by certain elders for the purpose of seeking his resignation from Augustine United church, the pastor, Rev. Russell McGillivray, Sunday announced from the pulpit he had no intention of resigning.

"This congregation hired me," he said, "If this congregation thinks it is time for me to go, this congregation will have to fire me.

"I am here as an appointee of the presbytery, and if this comes before the presbytery I will not relieve the presbytery. I will not resign to the presbytery. I will put the presbytery in the position, which has happened very seldom in the history of the Canadian church, of discharging me."

In a review of his seven-and-a-half years as minister of Augustine church, Mr. McGillivray charged that "for all that length of time I have had to endure the petty criticisms and opposition and disloyalty of certain members of the Session.

"I have had 89 meetings with my Session which covers the whole period of seven-and-a-half years. I have never had a pleasant Session meeting in that time. I considered, however, that it was my cross; but by what I heard some of those men say about my predecessors I sort of figured that I had inherited something. I hoped all the time that help would come, but no help ever came."

Mr. McGillivray said he had been quite prepared to continue to accept "that most undesirable situation. But when that hate organized itself and planned and held meetings, culminating in a large meeting of some 25 elders in the Y.M.C.A. last Tuesday evening, then I had no option but to place this matter where it belongs – not in the hands of a few, but in the hands of my people, the congregation of Augustine church."

He announced that the congregation would meet at 8 p.m. Monday March 17, to "either confirm the minister in his ministry in Augustine church, or ask him to leave that ministry in Augustine church."

Mr. McGillivray said that he had received a phone call last Wednesday evening from the secretary of [the] church board, "who is an elder, and so was, I understand, the chairman of this most irregular meeting in the Y.M.C.A.

He asked me if I would meet with four of those elders. Four to one seems like a fair division, I said I would on Tuesday, March 18, at 10 o'clock in

the morning. He went on to point out to me that those meetings had been held with only one object in view, and that was my welfare, and at the meeting on Tuesday night not one unkind word had been spoken concerning the minister.”

Continued Mr. McGillivray, “. . . I happen to know everyone who spoke, and everything that he said, and all those who were present, and how they voted. However, I gather that the gist of the matter is that for my own sake, and for the sake of Augustine, that the easy quiet way out would be for me to resign.

“No one will ever know . . . what a temptation that is . . . but that I am not going to do.”

Mr. McGillivray told the congregation that he had no organization. “I stand absolutely alone, except for that strangely wonderful support which I know will come from love, and from friendship and from those people who appreciate decency and fair play.”

Two prominent church elders refused comment on Rev. McGillivray’s statements. Said W.B. Sword: “It would be better to ignore the entire matter. I certainly do not intend to go on record.” M.D. Grant added, “I am not at liberty to say anything and have taken no part in the affair.”

Russell’s timing was poor, because Winnipeg Presbytery was meeting on Tuesday, March 11. Concerned about the wide newspaper publicity, Presbytery requested its Pastoral Relations Committee, augmented by at least five additional members, to confer with the Minister and the Official Board of Augustine. The Committee included Rev. Harold Frame, the Chairman of Presbytery.

There was not much time for the Committee to act prior to the congregational meeting. The Committee met on Thursday. One option it considered was to do nothing, but unfortunately it decided to wade in. It asked Russell to call a meeting of the Official Board for a frank discussion of the issue with the hope of avoiding a divisive congregational meeting. Russell refused to call the Board, and said that if the Board were called he would not attend.

The Committee met again Thursday evening and decided to exercise the authority of Presbytery and call a meeting of the Official Board for Friday. When contacted, both sides of the Board agreed. Russell reversed his earlier stand and not only attended but took the chair as chairman of the Official Board. The meeting lasted three and a half hours, and elders, trustees and managers of the church aired the issues.

Russell ensured that everyone who wanted to speak was able to make his or her points without interruption. Some were highly supportive of the minister, while others were unhappy with his perceived failures.

Those speaking against Russell's ministry mentioned:

- the Minister telling the Session about his holiday¹²
- the morning service of March 9
- Augustine's performance compared on a percentage and graph basis with the fine work of other churches
- the loss of the fine religious spirit of Augustine
- no spiritual happiness in Augustine
- lack of interest by the Minister in the organizations of the Church, the difficulties with Young Life, basketball and lack of religious instruction¹³, and
- lack of cooperation in the W.M.S. concert

Those in favour of his ministry questioned the fairness and balance of the statistical report, pointed to the annual reports of the Session and Board appreciating the work of the Minister, and deplored "long standing elements making for lack of cooperation". Those elements evidently pre-dated Russell's ministry. Mr. H.E. Wood who was the Clerk of Session, "spoke of the invitation to the Minister to come to Augustine; that we had asked him to leave a congregation where he was perfectly happy, presenting him with glowing reports of this church. He suggested that we recognize our responsibility and support the Minister whole-heartedly."

The outsiders from Presbytery perceived that neither side in the conflict wished to pursue the issue to the point of an open and permanent division of the congregation. Several members of the Committee suggested that the congregational meeting be cancelled, or at least that no vote be taken and the meeting be devoted to re-dedication. Russell thought that was not a fair thing to ask, and "stated quietly that he had appealed to the people, the Congregation, and that the meeting of the people must be held".

On Monday evening the congregational meeting was held with 450 members present, together with the Presbytery Committee. Again, Russell took the chair and allowed a complete airing of both sides without, however, entertaining any compromise solution. Members of both sides had already crafted a compromise motion that they believed the congregation would support, but he allowed only the vote on his ministry. He would only allow a standing vote, not a secret ballot. Finally the motion was put to vote and the congregation supported his ministry by a ratio of 3 to 1 (332 to 117).

Both the result and the acrimonious discussions were reported on the front page of the Winnipeg Tribune. The story was also picked up by Canadian Press and thereby went across Canada.

¹² In the September 1946 Session meeting he told of his summer vacation in the Canadian Rockies, returning through Montana and North Dakota.

¹³ The issue here was allowing kids from the neighbourhood to play basketball in the church gym without requiring a period of religious instruction.

McGillivray Upheld by Flock Minister's Wife Collapses on Hearing News

Rev. Russell McGillivray was confirmed in his ministry of Augustine United Church at a congregational meeting Monday evening by a vote of 332 to 117.

Mrs. McGillivray collapsed in her home shortly after she was informed of the decision. This morning Mrs. McGillivray was reported to be feeling "much better" and was resting in her home at 111 Royal Ave. Her collapse was attributed to "nervous strain of the past few weeks".

No statements from any of the 38 elders was forthcoming after the meeting or this morning. Their stand is expected to be revealed at a session meeting this evening.

Following announcement of the congregation's vote, Mr. McGillivray mounted his pulpit, smiled and said, "Thank you very much. I ask you to rise for the benediction." The meeting was then dissolved.

The decision in favor of Mr. McGillivray was not reached until tempers had flared and accusations and counter-charges were made for three hours.

A motion to confirm Mr. McGillivray in his ministry was made by Gordon Lawson, ste. 3B Locarno Apts., and seconded by Finlay Fraser.

"In my opinion, we are not here to judge and jury the actions of the elders or the shortcomings of the minister." said Mr. Lawson. "The problem is how can we be of best service to Augustine church and minimize the damage already done.

"We have been given figures to show that the church is losing ground . . . They do not in any way prove the cause of the situation. If the figures do have merit, can they not be used in a constructive way to spur the congregation instead of dividing it?"

W.L. Parr, an elder spoke for the 16 elders whose signatures were on the bottom of a letter sent out to the members of the church last week. He announced that another elder, R.E. Cunningham, wished his name to be added to that list.

Mr. Parr outlined the start of the Augustine dispute. He said that "In the course of their duties some elders found interest in Augustine declining and some hints of a change in ministry coming from members."

These elders then referred to the Augustine constitution and found that “the congregation and elders can’t meet officially unless called by the minister. It said that there can only be a discussion with the minister present,” said Mr. Parr. “So a meeting was held to decide the course of action. The sole object of all us was to maintain Augustine in the place of esteem in the United church of Canada which it had in the past,” he said.

“Someone told the minister,” he said. “I would judge that this was sometime on the Sunday morning of March 2. The public denunciation was made by the minister before the issue was raised.”

“After this a large majority of the elders decided that a change was needed,” he said. “A group was chosen to interview the minister. The interview was denied.

“Mr. McGillivray said that he was being crucified. This was not so. The presbytery assured us that our procedure was correct. We still didn’t want the congregation to meet. It creates division.”

“The meeting of the session was postponed one week. We felt that the congregation should hear the facts before meeting. Hence the letter when the regular session meeting was not held. The presbytery asked for a meeting of the board. There was plain speaking on both sides.”

Referring to pulpit charges of Mr. McGillivray, Mr. Parr said that there “was no back stabbing or reflections of character or integrity.”

David Mitchell, a member of the church from 1911, and an elder from 1919, said: “Before Mr. McGillivray came to Augustine it was considered that this church had an inflationary roll. This was cut before Mr. McGillivray”¹⁴.

Mr. Mitchell said: “While morning church attendance may have gone down during Mr. McGillivray’s term, there are quite a number more turning out to evening church.”

“Everyone who knows the minister knows when plans that are good are presented to him, he will be eager and co-operative. I say that people who desired [---¹⁵]ion is that they have argued themselves into thinking it.”

Mr. Mitchell said that three elders who had signed the letter sent to the members had come out and said they had made mistakes. He urged other elders to do the same.

¹⁴ A line is missing in the newspaper text.

¹⁵ One line at the bottom of the page was cut off in the microfilming.

W.T. Whiteford, an elder, told how he had first heard of the “extra” meeting some elders were holding. He said he had been approached by Fred D. Baragar who told him that “six or seven of the elders were going to meet. He told me that some were saying a change was needed. I said that I would go. That was mainly because I was curious to see who was there.”

“I remind you that there are 38 men on the board of elders,” said Mr. Whiteford. “When I joined seven years ago there were five men, now there are four, who rule the session. I was soon sat upon. Two months ago I was set on again. Those men are the kind who look down their noses at you when you come in.

“Last Friday night I heard the finest example of hate I have ever heard from a stage. The statements of one of the elders were of a premeditated nature. About 30 men in the session are good, strong Christians, the others I doubt.”

Mrs. F.D. Baragar said that dissension had arisen in Augustine church, not from the elders, but from the members through the elders.

“I contend that the public announcement was the last thing that should have been done,” she said. According to the speaker, the publicity from the “dissension” had “hurt the United church across Canada.”

“My objection is to the way the matter was handled and calling this meeting tonight. Augustine has suffered grievous damage. I contend that if, in seven and one half years, the minister has not been able to dispel difficulties, then I seriously question whether we can continue under his ministry,” said Mrs. Baragar.

Mr. Baragar said: “Those who hold the minister is satisfactory are sincere. I can work beside any member of that group. On the other hand after the things that were said from our pulpit, a great number can in no way hold office. After those were said they have no option.”

“It’s impossible to serve under those conditions,” he said. “The only one possibility of unity is a ‘nay’ vote to the motion before you.”

A.L. Crossin said: “This tragedy is entirely due to the minister. Mr. McGillivray called those elders conspirators of hate and unless those words are retracted there’ll be a serious split we can’t fix.”

The meeting, called by the minister, was the result of a conflict that was brought into the open nine days ago when Mr. McGillivray, in his Sunday morning sermon, charged that in the session were members who were

guilty of “Petty criticisms, opposition and disloyalty,” and that his resignation was sought.

“I have never had a pleasant session meeting in the 89 I have had at Augustine,” said the minister in that speech. He came to Augustine seven and a half years ago from Ottawa.

When the vote was finally counted and announced by the secretary, Henry Wood, there was prolonged clapping in the church. Most of the congregation filed past the pulpit to congratulate the minister.

In an interview afterwards, he said he intended now to continue his ministry in Augustine. He expressed a hope that the meeting would be considered as “an end to a chapter by all parties.”

“The congregation decided that I should stay and I intend to. I hope that their expression of confidence will mean an end to the differences of the past.”

Before the standing vote was taken, Locksley McNeil, an elder whose signature was on the circular letter from the elders last week, asked for a secret ballot. This proposed motion was answered by a standing vote, and rejected by a count of 242 to 216.

Russell and the congregation probably thought that they could now move forward. Although Session had to entertain a number of resignations the next day when it met, the meeting concluded “While deep concern was evident over the controversy just closed, members of Session seemed one in that a regenerated church would soon develop.”

In all, 17 elders resigned, as did some of the leadership in the Sunday School. By April, however, Session was able to state “That we go on record as expressing the utmost confidence in our Moderator the Reverend Russell McGillivray and his work and that we will support him to our utmost.” The church completed a very successful canvass, the ladies of the Church raised over \$1,100 at their anniversary tea, and 36 members were added to the church roll. Radio broadcasts of the services were resumed with positive public response.

However, the Pastoral Relations Committee still had to make its report to Presbytery, which it did nearly two months later on the afternoon of May 13. Of course, Russell was present as a member of Presbytery. The report was a bombshell, its interpretation of events very different from those recorded in the minutes of the two meetings of the Board and the congregation.

The Committee strongly criticized Russell’s handling of the controversy. It held that some of his rulings as chairman were wrong, and recommended that Presbytery amend its

manual so that in future meetings of this kind, Presbytery would have the power to appoint someone other than the minister to be chairman.

The Committee expressed sympathy with the intent of the four dissenters as being “moved by a deep regard for the spiritual welfare of the congregation”. It concluded “it was the minister’s unyielding and unwise determination to force an open vote for or against him – while making public the most damaging charges concerning those whom he believed to be against him – which was the most serious factor in making almost impossible the work of reconciliation. The Committee believes that this determination was gravely inimical to the peace and welfare of Augustine Church, and the wider good of The United Church of Canada”.

That evening Russell read the Committee report to a joint meeting of Session and the Board of Managers. He took almost two weeks to make his decision known. In the meantime, the Committee report, which was supposed to be secret and held by Presbytery *in retentis*, was reproduced in mimeograph form and widely circulated. Clearly he had enemies.

In the end, Russell felt that he had no alternative but to resign. He announced his intention to the congregation during the service on May 25. At the meeting of the Official Board the following day, Russell explained the reason for tendering his resignation:

He explained that he had taken the attitude throughout that the issue was one which he felt should be settled by the congregation itself and he felt that the congregation expressed its wishes. He then discussed the report presented to Winnipeg Presbytery by its Pastoral Relations Committee. He quoted portions of the report which he felt left him no alternative but to resign. He had given the matter the deepest thought and felt that even though the report had been held *in retentis* no objection had been raised to it in Presbytery and that he could not carry on under a Presbytery that had dealt with the problem as they had.

Shocked at the outcome, Augustine’s Official Board unanimously passed a resolution strongly condemning the activity and report of the Pastoral Committee. The Board deplored a biased presentation of the situation and an unwarranted interference in their affairs “when the energies of our Minister and of this Board and a host of loyal members of the congregation were being employed with considerable success in ensuring the continuance of a congregation which had gone on record in its choice of leadership”.

The Board stated that “the report as circulated has done inestimable damage to the reputation of and reflected on the good faith of Rev. Russell McGillivray, and has greatly increased the difficulties facing our congregation, and further there is ample evidence to satisfy us that the interpretation of the action of the Pastoral Relations Committee has shaken the faith of many United Church members in the fairness of the courts of the Church”.

And finally we attest to the truly Christian qualities of character and personal life of the Rev. Russell McGillivray, and to his unique and outstanding gifts as a preacher and minister to the congregation of Augustine Church over the past eight years, made so difficult through war and its aftermath.

One elder said “In his opinion we were allowing the most conscientious and spiritually minded man that has ever stood in our pulpit to leave.”

Russell’s resignation was effective July 31. Since he was owed five weeks holidays, his last Sunday was supposed to be June 22. However, the tragedy of this whole episode was compounded when the Sunday following his announcement, June 1, he suffered a heart attack while resting at home following the morning service.

According to newspaper reports, at least 20 members of the congregation resigned from the church, and most of them from the United Church of Canada as well, in protest over the way the Winnipeg Presbytery had dealt with their pastor. One said, “Mr. McGillivray stands for moral truth.” Another is quoted, “Mr. McGillivray thinks straight, he isn’t an apple polisher. The things about him which the Presbytery condemns are the things of which I approve.”

Several who wrote to Presbytery in protest called Presbytery undemocratic and autocratic. One echoed Russell’s own words from 1924 when he wrote, “It now comes out that the Presbytery of the United Church are not willing to concede that 75% of a congregation constitutes a majority.”

The writers made a different interpretation of Russell’s conduct and motivation. One letter to Presbytery stated, “It is our firm conviction that . . . Mr. McGillivray is far above any of the accusations or inferences brought against him . . . and that his procedure and motives throughout the whole proceedings were entirely blameless.” Another wrote, “His conduct while acting as Chairman of the two meetings . . . was an example of courage, courtesy and impartiality . . .”

The Pastoral Relations Committee sought to defend itself to Presbytery against the criticism from the Official Board. In the Presbytery meeting of June 6 it reported a meeting held with representatives of the Session, Official Board and Board of Managers on June 2. The Committee acknowledged certain details of the Board’s criticisms, but noted that the interpretation of events and of the report differed at some points. The Committee went on to state:

The Committee’s previous report held in retentis, specifically expressed the personal goodwill of the members to the minister, their respect of his ability, and their appreciation of his long service. The review of the Committee was of procedure and policy, and not of character, doctrine or morals. But because of certain inferences drawn from the report, altogether against the Committee’s will, the Committee would like here to

state unequivocally that its report in no way impugned the integrity of the Augustine minister, or questioned his sincerity or his devotion. The Committee indeed is pleased to join itself cordially with the Official Board of Augustine Church in the resolution in which they attest to their minister's Christian qualities.

At the same meeting, Russell's resignation was read and accepted "with many kind references to his work as a man, a minister of the gospel, and Presbyter".

There was no coverage of the story in the United Church Observer, but in a letter to the editor in the May 1, 1947 issue, Rev. R.S. Laidlaw of Toronto wrote to say that "recent events in a large western church reinforces his plea for a committee on pastoral relations".

Analysis

What was really going on here? It is difficult to get a balanced view, and there are obviously two interpretations of the same events.

There are certainly striking parallels with events twenty years earlier in Burlington, and this no doubt influenced Russell's reaction to events:

- Two groups in the congregation with irreconcilable opinions as to the way forward for the church
- A non-secret vote to clearly show where everyone stood
- A majority in favour of Russell's direction and leadership
- A purging of the dissidents, and the majority moving forward, smaller but united
- The dissident minority, backed by powerful outside forces, returning to overturn the majority decision

There was also tension over the proper role of Presbytery. In the Presbyterian system of governance, which the United Church adopted, Presbytery oversees the life and work of its congregations and is responsible to see that worship is rightly conducted, discipline is maintained, and that no divisive action is taken. Presbytery wanted reconciliation, and avoidance of any public display of dissent. At the same time, Mr. Parr's statements at the congregational meeting makes clear that Presbytery was in touch with the minority group in Session and endorsed their process immediately after March 9.

Russell took the more "Congregationalist" view that the congregation could decide its own affairs and direction. He did not believe reconciliation was desirable, because it would only be papering over the division and the undermining of his ministry would continue. He was looking for a surgical operation so that the healing process could begin.

No doubt there were also personal reasons why Russell reacted so vigorously to the criticisms of his ministry and took his uncompromising "all or nothing" position. Augustine was a huge congregation of over 1,000 members, with three administrative bodies (Session, Official Board and Board of Managers) and many organizations.

Finances were always tight, with special appeals needed to avoid deficits. In this demanding environment, with no assistant, any minister would rightly need to prioritize his time and attention, and some people and organizations would feel slighted. Likely his heart disease contributed to a growing lack of energy, and of patience.

He was convinced that the congregation supported his ministry, and that they, not the administrative bodies, were the only judges of his work. His experience of 1925-26 told him what damage could be done to a congregation when rival factions became active. He believed that the only way to deal with dissent was in the open, and that the will of the majority should prevail. His highest concern was for the welfare of the congregation, not his career, and he had no fear of resigning if that was best for the church.

Where he miscalculated was in making the division public. This embarrassed Presbytery, guaranteeing its involvement, and likely, angering certain members to the point that they were determined to have him removed. One prominent United Church minister in Toronto is reported to have said that Russell would get another church “over my dead body”, which indicates the antagonism and anger which he generated in parts of the denomination.

Oakville (1947 –1951)

When Russell resigned from Augustine, an old friend from Knox Burlington, Mr. J.M. Wallace of Oakville, Ontario told him that he had just moved into another house and had not yet sold his old one. The McGillivrays could use the old house as long as they wanted. The house was large, and Margaret's bedroom had an ensuite bathroom. Her fellow high school students assumed they were rich.

Mr. Wallace was a mechanical genius, designing new machines in his head. By the late 1940's, his business had grown into Oakville Wood Specialties, making plywood and Popsicle sticks. Mr. Wallace gave both Don and Colin jobs in his business, and Don remained in wood products his whole career.

Mr. Wallace was unschooled and he appreciated Russell's education. He collected art, and he would take Russell fishing. Mr. Wallace was a large benefactor to the Chiropractic College in Toronto, and Russell did some radio commercials for the college¹⁶.

Freed from the daily round of visits and meetings associated with pasturing a church, Russell began writing stories and articles for possible publication. Just weeks after leaving Winnipeg he penned "Valley Days", an account of his year in the Okanagan and North Thompson valleys of B.C.

Russell traveled to Ottawa and visited friends from the Southminster days, especially Mr. William Connor. Like Mr. Wallace, Mr. Connor owned a successful manufacturing concern, the Connor Washer Co. He lived in a stone estate in the Gatineau Hills, and collected art, including Kreighoffs.

Probably due to Mr. Connor's influence, Russell started a weekly column in the Saturday Ottawa Citizen that appeared on April 2, 1949 as the first of three installments. The column was entitled "This Business of Living" and significantly was not in the religion pages but on the first page of the second section. Two weeks later the Citizen announced that, "Originally planned as a three installment feature, public approval has been so impressive that arrangements have been made to extend the series indefinitely".

The time in Oakville enabled Russell to rebuild connections with his brothers and sisters, especially with Donald and Alice. As young people, both had conceived children out of wedlock, and had entered second marriages in the days before divorce was easily available. Evidently the siblings felt the need to reconcile, as they grew older.

¹⁶ Margaret says his voice sounded like Ronald Colman, "The Man With the Velvet Voice".

Dutton (1952 – 1955)

Despite his comfortable situation in Oakville, a desire to return to ministry and the need for an income led Russell to seek a church. Unable to obtain one through the United Church, he turned to the Presbyterian Church and his old friend E. Archie Thomson who was then the Secretary of the Board of Administration. Russell accepted a call in late 1951 to Knox Dutton, which is just outside St. Thomas, Ontario.

Within a couple of years he felt that his life in Dutton was too small. There were frequent trips to specialists for himself and his wife's ill health. The congregation was complacent.

The modesty of the church's goals is reflected in the Minister's report in the 1952 annual report:

We are deeply grateful that we have had another year together as a congregation.

We are happy that there was the will to make the church more beautiful.

We are content, in this undertaking, as in the general support of the church, and the world-wide work of the church, that we had a share.

We would be increasingly aware of the direction, strength and peace which come to us as we worship God in His House.

He wrote to E.A. Thomson for another appointment where he could be of more use and where he could put all of his remaining strength into ministry. Apparently nothing came of this appeal.

In November 1953, he got word that the Ottawa Citizen articles would stop on January 9 of the following year¹⁷. After he sent in the final articles, he recorded in his journal, "There is no sense of loss as of yet. Rather a feeling of relief that there need be no further sale of my inmost thoughts." Nevertheless, a few months later the urge to write returned, especially as he was not writing out his sermons. He wrote a number of articles but was unable to get them published.

His last years were ones of near constant pain and distress. On May 7, 1955 he wrote in his prayer diary, "O God, guide me I pray to some relief for this pain. And if no relief guide me how to do with it, day by day."

¹⁷ The run of 4 ½ years meant that he produced well nearly 250 articles. He also wrote for the Dutton Advance.



He journeyed by train to Edmonton to preach at the service of dedication of a new sanctuary for Central United on May 1, 1955 and was warmly welcomed back. The photo shows Russell at the Edmonton train station. On the right are his old friends Kenneth and Catherine Wilson.

The next Sunday in Dutton, Mother's Day, May 8, was his last service. After the service he underwent an operation for a hernia. Although he was thought to be recovering, he suffered successive heart attacks and died on Monday May 16, 1955 at St. Thomas-Elgin General Hospital.

The funeral was at Knox Church, Dutton on Wednesday. His old classmate, Rev. Archibald Thompson, gave the address. Burial was in Oakville Cemetery.

An editorial in the Dutton Advance read:

THE REV. RUSSELL MCGILLIVRAY

Few people won the affection of this community in so short a time as did the late Rev. Russell McGillivray. Although his ministry here was for an all-too-short period of three years and a half he made many friends not only among his congregation but in the community at large.

Mr. McGillivray suffered a severe heart attack a few years ago and he was aware of the probability of a recurrence. But he gave no sign of this in his work and in his visits to local homes and business places. His smile and cheery words gave a lift to many who sometimes needed them less than he did¹⁸.

¹⁸ An example is a letter to my parents written on 1 April 1954 in which he included the following advice to me:

Please, dear grandson, don't bother your head about learning to count, even up to seven. When you are old enough to need that sort of thing there will be a little gadget in your pocket, and you will just press a button and it will tell you at once how much you have in your pocket.

This business though of showing the social graces and helping in the clean-up after your parents will likely always be worthwhile.

The fine art of throwing things out of windows is something to be thought about. It can be carried too far, both for the things thrown out and for those who may be passing under the window.

The securing cooperation of your parents in the matter of prayer is to be commended. Use it as long as you can. The time will come when you may find praying very much a lone business, though never I hope for you a lonely business in the sense of feeling that there is no one listening at the other end.

So much for the grandson, except to tell you, my lad, that we are rooting for you always.

Those who heard Mr. McGillivray's final message at Knox on Mother's Day will not soon forget it, nor will they forget the courage he displayed in carrying out his work until only a few hours before the operation that eventually led to his passing. But somehow there was a feeling among those who knew him that that was the way he would have wanted it – being of service until the end.

Truly, Knox Church has lost a beloved minister and the community a Christian gentleman.

A clergy friend, Rev. W. R. Alp, Minister of St. Paul's United Church, Perth, Ontario, wrote:

The Rev. Russell McGillivray was the best friend I ever had, our friendship extending over some twenty five years. While we were together in Ottawa we shared many happy hours in the out-of-doors, the beauty of which he appreciated and loved so much. For nearly twenty years after our ways parted we wrote each other every week, letters in which he poured out his thoughts to me on life and books, religion and the church. He had an extraordinarily keen mind that expressed itself in an unusually interesting and penetrating way. But underneath it all he was a fundamentally kind and thoughtful man, a man who did not forget those "little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love" that are of the very essence of Christian living.

I owe more to him than I can ever put into words, and I am a better minister for all that I learned from him. More than once he spoke to me in admiration of Paul's word to Timothy about being a good minister of Jesus Christ. That he might be just that was the quiet ambition of his life. For those of us who knew him intimately he was a good minister of Jesus Christ. For me Russell McGillivray's memory will always remain an abiding influence. To his sorrowing wife and family I extend my deepest sympathy, for with them I share the loss of one who meant much to us as we walked life's way. But it is good to know that we do not sorrow as those who have no hope. We have for our assurance the hope that death is not the end of those ties of love and friendship that we have known here on earth. *We shall meet again.*

The following is an undated prayer:

I would not presume.

I would not presume, O God,
To seem to remind Thee
Of the need of any of Thy children.

Thou must know of aching hearts and empty lives;
Why should I dare to seem
More tenderly concerned?

Thou must know of little children,
Crippled, hurt for life, for whom any urging of mine
Would seem an impertinence.

Thy part in an awakening world
Is greater than any human part.
Then why should I try to tell Thee
That the whole human family is stirring?

Thou must know of faith and faithlessness,
Of dead souls and yearning souls;
Why should I bring these to Thee?

O my Father, Thou art the maker of every sensitive concern
Not as presuming, but because there is no other way,
I bring all the world again to Thee.

Russell McGillivray

Appendix: Selected Writings

The New Outlook for May 20, 1936

There's Nothing In It

*A Sermon Preached in Southminster United Church, Ottawa, May 10th
by Rev. Russell McGillivray, B.A., B.D.*

“Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity.” – Ps. 24-4

I am aware that other translations might be given instead of these words. But they are good words, and, though suggesting a terrible thing, are easy to remember.

The Psalmist is pondering the signs of a life worthy to stand in the presence of the holiest things, of God. And one of the signs is, “who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity.”

Amongst the plots for story or drama there is the one which tells of a father or mother of quiet tastes, living a rich and satisfying life, free from strain, striving and pressure. They seem to know what they want and also seem aware when they have found it. If they are putting a good deal into their way of life, it is all, so they think, of abiding worth.

There is then a daughter or a son, or both, and through the teens and twenties, life for them is a strenuous, striving, seeking affair. Nothing that was good enough for their parents is good enough for them. Houses, cars, clubs, position, everything must be different. And they must get into society, something that never worried any of their name before.

And they find, probably, but at any rate, their parents know all the time, that the thing they are striving for is an empty thing, unworthy, vanity.

There is the plot. It comes out so often, because it happens so often.

The great pity, to any one who cares, is the use of priceless instruments for worthless things.

Someone says to a dear friend, “You should see Bill make and shake a cocktail. His hands seem so skilled; the motions (I suppose up to a point) are just right.” And the friend sighs inwardly and recalls how proud they were of those hands, those fingers. How they used to wonder if they were the hands of a surgeon, or an artist, or a pianist. And now – the finest piece of work they do is with a cocktail shaker. What a pitiful waste of priceless instruments.

And those fine steady eyes – at least they were steady – what precious things – meant to be bright and keen; meant to close at the right time and to open for the possibilities of the new day; to be used in reading. And they are used only for some worthless rag of a thing, and never anything worthy. Talk about lifting your soul to vanity – that surely is it, when hands and eyes can find such unworthy uses. Part of the keenness of disappointment is that he or she was bright and keen mentally.

How often father has said to mother, “His mind is quicker than mine ever was and with the chances that he has for securing information he ought to go far.” And the mother proudly answered, “Yes, he has a good head.”

It is true that one of the tragedies of our day is that there are those with good heads, trained minds, who are not getting the chance for which they yearn. But a greater tragedy is the use of good heads and keen minds on just sheer, dumb things, or things that are not worthy of the great instrument that is theirs.

How to entertain, the rules of etiquette, the clothes to wear, the right people to meet, the keeping of a bridge score – the pity, that behind a brow like that there is not much more than that.

Lifting up your mind, that mighty thing, to vanity, to emptiness.

In the plot sometimes the deepest thing is touched on, but often not. I mean, religion, character, the soul. Now and then you will meet the person who will repudiate his soul. He will say with swelling pride, “There is no such thing in me.” But often, if one were to charge them and say, “You have no personality, no soul, there is nothing to you,” they would resent it.

And you see, into this senseless, empty sort of thing, not only have their hands and eyes and minds gone, but their soul has gone too.

He is a friendly man. He does not cheat in golf (a test for some). But the sum of him, that which is his character, is a poor thing. He is counted good, frequently, simply because he isn't very bad.

But the soul, which in another dared great things, in him has its loftiest flight in keeping things going that are not much worth keeping going.

The old story of Esau crops up, selling his birthright for a dish of food; of Judas, selling out for thirty pieces of silver. But this much worse; they give their soul for nothing, they lift up their soul to vanity, emptiness, unreality.

The story has different endings.

Sometimes a crash comes, a depression and they are driven back to reality. The experience may be accepted wisely or be the subject of constant regret.

Sometimes they just go on and on, being used here and there, but on the whole, using the great gifts of life, body, mind and spirit, for empty, vain things. And God must just have to mark over the whole of that life effort the terrible word, from His standpoint and from ours, “Wasted”.

Sometimes they come to themselves. They may be assisted by a friend, a child, a minister (happy minister, so to help). They see the emptiness of the things they were doing. They see the fullness and richness of the life of depth, serenity, quiet wisdom, true service. And they speak deeply of the grace of God that saved them from that thing they were doing when they lifted their soul unto vanity.

A Meeting of the Board

By Russell McGillivray

It was over. Some hurried away. Some gathered in twos and threes to say to each other the things they should have said in the meeting. Every one was cold. An unexpected cold spell and a determination to burn no more coal gave a meeting-room that was as "cold as charity."

The chairman, who was the minister, went to his study quickly and from there home, at once. He hoped he would not meet any one. Board meetings always depressed him and after this meeting the discouragement was very real.

The members of the board, if not discouraged, were not satisfied. Even the least sensitive had a feeling that an evening so spent was not big enough for the things concerning the Church, and the relation of human life to the only things of worth, the ideals of Jesus Christ.

The meeting had opened with prayer by the chairman. It was short, expressing gratitude for the Church, and a desire for leading in plans and for eagerness in serving. It may be that the chairman made a mistake there. Should he have opened the meeting with a season of prayer? Probably; and yet he had heard so few of his men pray, that he was not at all sure that there would be anything other than a season of terrible silence. And he was sure that some who should pray, would not.

The meeting had closed, at long last, with the benediction. Queer business, that benediction, when you think of it! "Grace, mercy and peace," and one could only wonder if it was a prayer that grace and mercy and peace would come back again. If they had been present in the meeting, they were forced into inaction.

All of which makes one wonder if there are suggestions that might help boards and board members? As you read the suggestions and say to yourself, "This does not mean us," be thankful. As you read and feel that a finger has been placed on a sore spot, know this, that the finger is placed there, not to hurt, but that you might know where attention should be given to a wrong condition.

As so (not at all in correct order of importance), firstly, one might suggest, that board members should attend board meetings. It is surely a strange conceit to think that a congregation elected you to an office in the church, just for your name, and that you are not expected to face the spade work of board meetings. There are reasons for absences, but they should be reasons that would match the importance and responsibility of your position as a member of the board of the Church of Jesus Christ. And if you do not attend you place every one in an awkward position. The congregation does not wish to ask for your resignation, because of yourself, because of your people, and, unfortunately, because of your contribution. If there is a fuss or a change of pastorate there may be a full

meeting of the board, but for the glorious time of labor, when things are steady and normal, there are small meetings. So, might I suggest to you, that board members should attend.

And then, secondly, board members should have something like vision as to what it is all about. There must be money and a good deal of talk about money. But that is only the means to an end. If all is well that is only the response to your order for your car, "Fill her up." The money is there. Now, where have we been? Where are we going? Do we need to go anywhere? Surely we can't stand still and just let the fuel evaporate and then say, "Fill her up" again.

Some little knowledge of Church history is helpful. But even a knowledge of those little churches that any one may read of in Paul's letters is very quickening. Then a church board member knows – this church of mine is not a dignified club, it is not a place where children are restrained for an hour and where young people might better be than other places. It is a living thing. It has to do with the very way of life for children, young people and older people. It is the highest point of any community. There is the promise of a good day to-day and a better to-morrow, since that is the institution that has to do with the application of the living power of Jesus Christ.

And, thirdly, there should be some realization of the Church as a whole to which your church belongs. You remember some of you voted and were greatly stirred back in 1925. Some of you did not vote and were proud that your Church went forward with no break. There was concern then about rules, and courts, and how customs would or would not be followed.

Now, it is surprising, when the Presbytery or Conference or Council is mentioned that you confess somewhat too easily that you do not know anything about them. If you think of a layman attending one of these courts of the Church, all too seldom do you think of it as an honor that might be yours.

And your Church has taken a world stand, in Canada and to the farthest parts of the earth. You are somewhat proud of that stand and yet when some word comes from those charged with this greater Church responsibility, all too frequently you feel, "What have they got to do with us or we with them?"

Fourthly, then, and this is very delicate and is approached only with a desire to be understood. Is it too blunt to suggest that there might be more personal spirituality? You feel that. You have never been quite sure what you should do about it. You do not claim any extraordinary spiritual experience. The coming into the Church was quite normal. There has always been a shyness about saying much about religion, and you have found, that sometimes, one of many pious expressions was a very unlikable and unhelpful board member.

Any yet – yes, it must be faced. You really are not at that board because of your success in getting things done either in or out of the Church. You are there because you

are a follower of Jesus Christ and you are meeting with men who have the same dedication. There never can be too much personal spirituality on any board.

And then, finally, there is that board member who is the chairman of the board, the minister of your church. He is paid a salary. He is employed on certain terms. He goes elsewhere and another is secured in his place, on certain terms. There are business details about the relationship. But he really is not the business executive of the church. The finance committee have the responsibility concerning the finances.

He has been with you quite a time. It is probably time he moved on. Or he has just come and you are praising him and comparing him and are sure that at last you have the perfect minister. Rest assured, you haven't. They haven't made any perfect ones yet, even though some ministers may think so.

It may be that the minister is failing seriously. But have you tried to help him? How many friendly chats have you had with him? Yes, say something about his not having been in your house for so long. When did you ever invite him to be a guest in your home? You complain that he shows friendship for So-and-so. Is he to have no friends? Did you ever give him the opportunity to show friendship for you?

But let us not debate about the minister. No pity nor sentimentality are asked for. Only that you might remember and consider. He stood by you, you recall, those nights and days. How much was he paid for that? But, you know, you can't ever pay for that sort of thing. His position is peculiar. He is very much at your mercy, board member, in many ways beyond his salary. And, above all, consider, in these days, trying days, his first call is to be a "good minister of Jesus Christ."

And now, probably, we could have a special board meeting, and make it a deeper, more satisfying, more encouraging, meeting than ever before.

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